

HANDS

I am a fairly large man but I have small hands.
this is a disadvantage in fist fights
but being in my sixties moving toward seventy
I have long since retired from that --
I haven't swung at anybody for a couple of
months (I was intoxicated New Year's eve, help-
ing my intoxicated part-time gardener up the
drive -- down the drive -- toward his auto
when upon a thought I straightened him for
a shot, swung and missed).

all right. this is about hands. back to
this.

I buy my fish at this small San Pedro shop.
the old boy, the keeper, he has been there
for years
a fine fellow.

we always make small talk as he weighs and
wraps the fish.

after that
I pay with some bills and he comes back
with the change.

I hold my hand out and here comes this huge
hand of his and
he drops the change into my little hand.

I pocket the change, pick up the fish and
walk toward the door.

"take it easy," he says.

"you too, buddy," I tell him
then walk out the door toward my car.
always thinking, this guy should have been
my buddy in the old days of the schoolyards
when I had to fight off and bluff away
the bullies
it would have saved me much of the old
mental agony.

meanwhile, his fish are fresh, the
best in town.

-- Charles Bukowski

San Pedro CA